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ABSTRACT

On every continent and in virtually every sovereign nation, rural people are not nearly as well served by educational programs as their fellow countrymen who reside in urban centers. Those persons in governmental agencies who seek solutions to the problems of rural education are confronted by scattered student populations, hostile geography, multiple dialects and languages, shortages of teachers, and competition for sparse funds with other agencies. Despite a wide variety of implementing systems, the four following national educational policies are similar from country to country: (1) national policy shall be predicated upon a full-scale survey of educational conditions throughout the country: (2) national policy shall be to eradicate illiteracy throughout the country: (3) national policy shall unite rural education efforts with broader programs of rural development: and (4) national educational policy shall make extensive use of the mass media in its implementation. Rural education has been most successful when there has been substantial local involvement in both planning and delivery. Rural education programs seem to die from excessive centralization and from complicated bureaucratic relationships. Volunteers at all levels can be used effectively in delivering educational programs. Educational planners will do well to examine the systems now being tested around the world before choosing from among the options available to them for implementing national educational policy. (NEC)

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# SYSTEMS FOR IMPLEMENTING RURAL EDUCATION POLICY

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> ...we should do well to remember that about two thirds of the world's population still lives in countries with an average per capita income of less than $250 per year. Of these, the vast majority are rural dwellers who continue to depend upon agriculture for their livelihood, and there can be little doubt that in the less developed nations rural people have often been shortchanged in the allocations of social and economic benefits...[1]

On every continent and in virtually every sovereign nation, rural people are not nearly as well served by educational programs as their fellow countrymen who reside in urban centers. The differences are abundantly clear with rural citizens often having no organized educational opportunities available to them. When opportunities are available, they tend to be at impossible distances, over non-existant roads, directed by poorly trained teachers with alien values and orientations who use irrelevant curricula without the assistance of sufficient books, laboratories or supplementary learning materials.

Those persons in ministries and departments of education who must seek solutions to the vexing problems posed by rural education find themselves confronted by a scattered student population and a hostile geography punctuated by mountains, rivers, deserts, and monsoons. Should they be fortunate enough to overcome those formidable barriers, the educators must then confront problems of multiple dialects and languages, shortages of teachers, and competition for sparse funds with other social agencies.

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[1] Foster, Philip and James Sheffield. Education and Rural Development: World Yearbook of Education. London: University of London, 1974. p. 3

Unless it has a strong, focused commitment at the top of its hierarchy, the responsible bureaucracy may itself become an impediment to problem solutions. Educational agencies often must rely upon insufficient statistical reports for their version of "truth" about educational conditions, and they may also be hampered by national policy which delivers more lip service than funds to improving educational conditions.

A final impediment to problem resolution is a resisting elite. When an elite believes that mass education poses a threat to the advantages it enjoys, that elite can wield political power far out of proportion to its own number. In some countries, that power has been used to restrict the rate at which improvements in educational conditions can be achieved.

Policy and its Implementation. Although no nation in the world can claim to have solved all problems inherent in rural education, almost all have made calculated attempts to alleviate the most pressing ones. The national system of attack varies by geography, wealth, and culture rather than by reason of policy. In fact, national policies are far more consistent around the world than are the systems designed to implement them. An examination of four common national policy statements and the diverse systems of implementation illustrates the phenomenon.

1. National policy shall be predicated upon a full-scale survey of educational conditions throughout the country. Many nations have preceded large scale educational reform with a comprehensive analysis of literacy rates, teacher availability, teacher preparation, availability of books, condition of school buildings and other such related

conditions. In Indonesia, for example, a special Office of Educational Development was created and attached to the Ministry of Education and Culture. That office's first task was to undertake the National Assessment of Education Project.[2] With the assistance of external agencies, the assessment project conducted a broad national survey and a series of in-depth case studies. The Indonesian survey was committed from its inception to integrating long-range programs to survey findings.

Thailand, facing the same lack of planning data, also has conducted a national survey. In that nation, program recommendations followed data gathering activities as opposed to being integrated with them. Instrumentation and methodology were developed by ministry personnel with external consultative assistance. External consultants also conducted training sessions for the cadre who actually conducted the assessment, and the assessment project was used as a focus for the in-service education of computer personnel. Thus, in addition to gaining information about conditions in the kingdom, Thailand used the survey project as a means to improve the skills of national, regional, and local educational personnel.

2. National policy shall be to eradicate illiteracy throughout the country. Illiteracy eradication is perhaps the most commonly espused national policy and the most difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, some heroic attempts have been undertaken. For example, in Nepal, the number of elementary schools (grades 1-3) and secondary schools (grades 4-7) has increased one-hundred fold since 1958.

The key to the growth was the establishment of the National

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[2] Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. Educational Innovation in Indonesia. Paris: UNESCO Press, 1975. (EIE No. 13)

Development Service (NDS). People educated by the government are expected to return that investment by a period of service in the NDS. Returning to a village other than their own, members of the NDS invest themselves in community improvement projects. Schools are built and then staffed by efforts of the NDS personnel. Illiteracy is decreasing proportionate to the investment, and young women are for the first time gaining access to the educational system.

Perhaps the most famous example of literacy eradication attempts occured in the Caribbean, and although Cuba's form of government is unique within the hemisphere, much can be learned from the system it chose to attack the problem. Premier Castro began the attack by convincing 100,000 young students to join an educational brigade to attack illiteracy throughout the island.

After a brief training session to introduce the *brigadistas* to the books they would use and to introduce them to the alien rural culture they would enter, the young people dispersed in uniform and beret with knapsack, books, hammock, and lantern to begin the massive effort.

The young people worked side by side with the *campesinos*, often in incredible poverty, to establish a rapport which could facilitate the evening and rainy day educational sessions. Posters helped with their theme: "Those who know, teach; those who don't learn." The television and radio theme was "Every Cuban a teacher; every house a school."[3]

As each family passed the literacy examination, a red flag was placed on the door, and a village was authorized to raise a flag

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[3]Kozol, Jonathan. "How Cuba Fought Illiteracy," Learning, May/June, 1977, pp. 27-29+.

declaring its freedom from illiteracy when the last house had earned its flag.

UNESCO has documented the success of the program which reduced illiteracy by about three-fourths. Of the new literates, nearly eighty percent entered the follow-up program, *seguimiento*, in an effort to reach the sixth grade level.

Egypt has embarked upon an ambitious program to establish annually 1,000 new one-classroom schools.[4] Sites are chosen according to national priorities including remoteness, local literacy rates, and the availability of a teacher. Students are children of compulsory age, drop-outs, and even a few adults. Retired teachers, educated women, conscripted university graduates, secondary students, and students from teacher institutes comprise the teaching staff for the new schools. The program's curriculum is language and literacy oriented with some mathematics included. Improved hygiene and the reduction of superstitious beliefs are other instructional objectives in this Egypitian project.

Project IMPACT (Instructional Management by Parents, Community and Teachers) as implemented in the Phillipines has introduced a modular curriculum to increase the number of students which one teacher can manage.[5] In ungraded schools, students are organized into "families of learners" which span several traditional grade levels.

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[4]Yusef Salah El-Din Kotb. "The One-Classroom School," in Education for Development. Washington: International Council on Education for Teaching, 1977. pp. 17-25.

[5]Soriano, Liceria Brillantes. "Mass Primary Education in the Phillipines," in Education for Development. op. cit., pp. 91-99.

The curriculum, largely communication arts and mathematics, has been written in self-pacing modules. In the project, students work individually with the modules, engage in a considerable amount of peer learning in groups of six to eight learners, and they receive tutorial assistance from those who have advanced by mastery to the higher level modules. Under this instructional system, single teachers can supervise one hundred or more students.

3. National policy shall unite rural education efforts with broader programs of rural development. The last twenty years have seen rural education more often become a part of combined economic, agricultural, social, and health programs. History has shown significant effects from the integrated development programs.

In Peru, significant changes occurred following the issuance of *Decreto Ley* 19326 in 1972.[6] At the community level, parents were encouraged to go to the school of their children to get nutritional information and to participate in the affairs of the school. Under the auspices of the Educational Extension Program, television, radio, bulletin boards, and even the theater were used to help imbue each citizen with a sense of ownership in the changes taking place.

Many of the changes emerged from a decentralization of the nuclearization concept. Under redesigned *Nucleos Educativos Comunales*, the schools were committed to opening their resources to the community, and the community was encouraged to reciprocate. Coordination at the village level remains the key in the integration of education with programs in health, hygiene, commerce, agriculture, and labor.

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[6]Ley General de Education, *Decreto Ley* 19326, Article 6. Lima: Ministerio de Education, 1972.

In Iran, the approach was somewhat similar to that in Nepal. A corps of workers was drawn from among high school graduates who had completed six to eight months of military service. The remainder of their two year tour was spent in educational projects throughout the nation. In addition to literacy training, the corpsmen were to improve sanitary conditions in the villages, to teach law, and to increase knowledge of health.

With over 100,000 corpsmen teaching in 1973-74, the number of persons receiving primary education increased by three million in the 1963-73 decade, and the Corpsmen constructed 3,200 school buildings in 1973 alone.[7]

In the Maharashta State of India, District Development Committees have had considerable success. The first Committee conducted a local census to identify illiterates and educated persons who could teach them. After classes were established by the Committee, it encouraged adult attendance. At home, school age children were charged with educating their parents.

In Maharashta, village celebrations were held to commemorate newly attained literacy. However, the celebrations are not now conducted until evidence is received that acquired knowledge has been used for village improvement. Successes have been best in the 14-25 year age group and in the districts where cooperation existed among education, agriculture, welfare, rural development, and publicity programs.[8]

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[7]Adolfotook, Makin. "Formation of Education Corps in Iran," Adult Leadership, February, 1976, p. 211.

[8]Naik, Chitra. Education Innovation in India. Paris: UNESCO Press, 1974. (EIE No. 11)

In a program designed to integrate basic educational skills with artisan and agricultural training, Kenya created Village Polytechnics in a deliberate attempt to destroy the second class status of rural oriented craft training. A curriculum including carpentry, masonry, beekeeping, tanning, sewing, poultry keeping and bicycle repair was offered by skilled, local farmers willing to teach others.[9] Primary school teachers often taught evening literacy classes at the polytechnic.

4. National educational policy shall make extensive use of the mass media in its implementation. Of the mass media, radio usage certainly far exceeds that of television. In a newly published book,[10] many radio directed educational programs are identified. A partial listing would include language training in China, food preparation in the Philippines, farming techniques in Guatemala, health education in Kenya, Finland and Trinidad, nutrition in Brazil, Tanzania, and South Korea, mathematics in Nicaragua, and in Bangladesh, farmers get informed about fertilizers and farming techniques and about fishing and forestry by radio.

In this hemisphere, radio programming has been extensive. Radio Santa Maria in the Dominican Republic has provided opportunities for adults to complete a primary school, eight-year curriculum in four years. Lesson sheets are distributed weekly, explanations of the

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[9] Foster and Sheffield. op.cit., pp. 283-301.

[10] Jamison, Dean and Emile McAnany. Radio for Education and Development. London: Sage Publications, 1978.

sheets are broadcast daily, and weekly discussions are held at field locations. Field teachers visit students weekly and receive about sixty percent of the students' small weekly fee.[11]

*Accion Cultural Popular* (ACPO) has been providing radio broadcasting to Columbian *campesnos* for thirty years.[12] ACPO's earliest broadcasts were focused on basic literacy. Basic textbooks were written to be used in conjunction with the broadcasts, and training programs for field workers were eventually instituted. Teacher education, health education, and prison education each received attention via ACPO.

Today, ACPO is perhaps the world's most copied system with twenty countries having adopted a related kind of broadcasting. In its eighty hours of weekly broadcasts, ACPO offers a basic course in literacy, in numbers and communication, a course in health and work and a course in community life and problems. The latter three courses take a modular approach which permits the occasional listener to profit from such topical broadcasts as immunization, alcoholism, and vegetable gardening.

Radiophonic "schools" are organized in any convenient location where ten or more persons wish to learn together with the help of a volunteer radiophonic school monitor and a *Campesino* Library provides practical sourcebooks for the day-to-day problems of the *campesino*-learner.

Although El Salvador is the only country to make a national commitment to television as an instructional medium, Columbia, Niger, Samoa, Mexico and the Ivory Coast are among countries that have used television

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[11] White, Robert. An Alternative Pattern of Basic Education: Radio Santa Maria. Paris: UNESCO, 1976. (EIE No. 30)

[12] Masoner, Paul and Liliana de Masoner. "Nonformal Education for Rural Development in Columbia," in Education for Development. op. cit., pp 109-118.

in serious educational experiments. Colombia, Niger and the Ivory Coast broadcast primary education programs, and El Salvador concentrated on grades 7-9 in its early programming.

Non-formal education has made extensive use of television. Nutrition, hygiene, and agriculture are common adult subjects in developing nations, and "Big Bird" and the cast from Sesame Street are favorites of children around the world.

Television lags behind radio as an important medium primarily because of the sophisticated infrastructure required to support its use in rural areas. Put succinctly, when the set goes blank, it may stay blank for weeks or months because of the scarcity of technicians in remote locations to repair it.

Summary. An analysis of the systems of education employed around the world to implement national educational policy makes several generalizations plausible:

1. Policies are more similar from country to country than are the implementing systems;
2. Rural education has been most successful when there has been substantial local involvement in both planning and delivery;
3. Rural education programs seem to die from excessive centralization and from complicated bureaucratic relationships;
4. Rural education has been most successful when integrated at the village level with other development projects; and
5. Volunteers at all levels can be used effectively in delivering educational programs.

In conclusion, two divergent scenarios can provide educational planners with good reason to evaluate their development proposals.

The first scenario is pessimistic and not pleasant:

a. increased rural education leads to increased migration to urban centers;

b. energy problems are not solved;

c. birth rates remain high;

d. human frustration rises;

e. hunger and starvation increases;

f. urban riot and national revolution become the norm; and

g. people without rural skills (lost with their grandparents) return to the land unprepared to survive.

Acceptance of this sobering scenario requires a different kind of programming, and as the author of one science fiction book suggests, the appropriate curriculum may well be the construction of bows and arrows!

In the second scenario:

a. education increases the productivity and economic capacity of the masses;

b. improved education increases national research, development, and technological capacity;

c. improved technology results in continuing "breakthroughs" particularly solving the energy crisis;

d. increased education and a rising standard of living reduces destructive birth rates; and

e. chances increase for world survival at an improved standard of human existence.

Acceptance of this optimistic scenario calls for policy resolution in favor of literacy education and vocational training for the masses and higher education for those most capable of profiting from it. Such commitment probably will not come unless nations painfully increase, once again, that portion of their wealth now being invested in the implementation of national educational policy.

Even with additional funds, educational planners will do well to examine the systems now being tested around the world before choosing

from among the options available to them for implementing national educational policy.

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